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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



A SERIES OF PUBLICA-
TIONS RELATING TO THE
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

VOL. II, No. 2

NEW YORK
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
HEYE FOUNDATION
1919

**Publications of the Museum of the
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Vol. 2

The Antiquities of Manabi, Ecuador: Final Report. By Marshall H. Saville. 1910. \$25.00.

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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



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THIS series of INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS is devoted primarily to the publication of the results of studies by members of the staff of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, and is uniform with HISPANIC NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS, published by the Hispanic Society of America, with which organization this Museum is in cordial coöperation.

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**AN ANCIENT ALGONKIAN
FISHING VILLAGE AT
CAYUGA, NEW YORK**

BY

ALANSON B. SKINNER

AN ANCIENT ALGONKIAN FISH- ING VILLAGE AT CAYUGA, NEW YORK

By ALANSON B. SKINNER



IN Beauchamp's invaluable volume on The Aboriginal Occupation of New York (*Bulletin 32 of the New York State Museum*, p. 37), the following statement occurs among the data relating to archeological sites listed as found in Cayuga county:

"North Cayuga, St. Stephen's or Thiohero, was two miles north of Cayuga village, on lot 24, Aurelius. The site occupies three or four acres east of the canal and north of the highway. Jesuit rings and European articles are found. In an early cache nearby was found a plate of mica and other curious articles. This and most of the following sites were reported by W. W. Adams of Mapleton. Gen. J. S. Clark said Choharo 'was the Tichero (Thiohero) or St. Stephen's of the *Jesuit Relations*, said to signify

44	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>the place of rushes, at the foot of Cayuga lake on the east side, at the exact point where the bridge of the middle turnpike left the east shore. The trail across the marsh followed the north bank of the ancient channel of the Seneca river.'"</p> <p>Unfortunately, Dr Beauchamp, keen observer that he is, was unable to visit this site personally while engaged in the task of locating the aboriginal remains within the boundaries of New York state, but relied on the statements of his predecessors, quoted above. As a result, no identification could be more definite yet more incorrect. When the writer examined this site in August and September, 1916, in behalf of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, no trace of Iroquoian occupancy was to be found. The location is accurate, but the artifacts consist of notched arrowpoints, gouges, celts, and typical Algonkian vessels with pointed bases. No Jesuit rings, glass beads, or other modern objects can be discovered, in either the refuse-heaps or the graves, or in the collections of the local farmers.</p>
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BURIALS	45
<p>Everything points to an ancient, pre-Iroquoian Algonkian population, and, in fact, from this spot to Howlands island in Seneca river, no other traces seem to occur, save that on Howlands island certain Eskimoan, possibly even older, forms are reported, such as rubbed points and semilunar knives of slate.</p> <p>After a preliminary examination of the refuse-heaps, the writer proceeded to excavate the remainder of the cemetery, most of which had been destroyed by laborers working on the Barge canal and in road-building. At the site there is a deposit of three or four feet of very hard, clayey soil mixed with broken shale which overlies an outcrop of solid shale. In interring their dead, the Indians cut through the surface earth to bed-rock, and in some instances even hacked out small hollows in the soft stone to contain the bodies.</p> <p>The first grave was opened August 11, and was found to contain, at a depth of three feet, a flexed skeleton headed east, with the head twisted so that the face</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

46	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>was upward. Under the occiput were a large, well-made, stone celt (pl. II, <i>d</i>), and a bear's superior maxillary cut with a stone knife (pl. II, <i>e</i>), possibly part of a headdress or a head ornament. Three unusually large and heavy, stemmed, stone arrowpoints were found irregularly placed in the grave (pl. II, <i>a-c</i>); and on the lower left arm was the remnant of a band of woven material that had been covered with thin, cylindrical beads of native copper. These beads, 110 in number, were mostly half an inch or less in length (a few were longer), and had been sewed on in parallel longitudinal bands five deep. Close to them, and stained by the copper, which had likewise stained the left ulna and radius of the skeleton a rich green, were the jaws and bones of a weasel, and some fish-bones. A neatly cut piece of mica (pl. II, <i>f</i>), about 4 inches long by 2½ inches broad, lay over the right wrist.</p> <p>Grave No. 2 contained, at a depth of four feet, a greatly compressed, flexed skeleton, headed north, with face upward.</p>
II	INDIAN NOTES



CELT, ARROWPOINTS, MICA, AND PART OF A CUT BEAR'S JAW, FROM GRAVE NO. 1, MUD LOCK. (ABOUT ONE-THIRD SIZE)

BURIALS	47
<p>Near the head were two worked shells of the box-tortoise. One lacked the plastron, and had the inner surface scored with lines, showing that it had been scraped with a stone tool, cleaned, and polished for use as a cup or a bowl. The other shell was complete, and contained half a dozen small, white, quartz pebbles. The carapace had several perforations made with a stone drill. This shell had evidently been used as a rattle, identical in form with the rattles used today by the Delaware Indians in their annual ceremony.</p> <p>Grave No. 3 (pl. III) was an older grave than No. 2, which had been cut into it, and the diggers had removed the leg-bones and pelvis of the remains there interred, so that only the head and trunk remained. Presumably Burial 3 had been flexed, heading west and facing north. In front of the face was a pile of fragments of what proved to be two fine bone or antler harpoon points and the barbs of a third (pl. IV, <i>a, b, e</i>). The first two harpoons are barbed on one side only,</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

48	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>and the barbs themselves are dull. The third is also unilateral, but is more practical in appearance, for it has sharp barbs which turn backward. With these fine implements were two large and heavy, notched, stone points. Behind the head (south of the occiput), as pl. III shows, was found one of the ordinary flat, pebble net-sinkers of the region, and on it three fragments of what appears to have been a bone blank cut by longitudinal grooving and partly shaped for use as a harpoon head. Under the skull were another flat, notched, stone sinker, a bodkin of bird-bone, and a piece of bird-bone (see pl. IV, <i>c, d, f</i>). This grave was cut through to the solid shale at a depth of four feet.</p> <p>Grave No. 4 contained the flexed skeleton of a child two or three years of age, at a depth of three and a half feet. In this instance the shale was nearer the surface, and the Indian had pecked out a small basin, about six inches deep, to contain the body, which, judging by appearances, had been crammed forcibly into the tomb. It was headed north,</p>
II	INDIAN NOTES

SKINNER — SITE AT CAYUGA

PL. III



GRAVE NO. 3 AT MUD LOCK

BURIALS	49
<p>facing west, and there were no objects in the grave.</p> <p>Grave No. 5. This sepulcher was of a very unusual type, consisting of a round hole pecked about six inches into the shale, which here was three feet from the surface. In this hole, eighteen inches in diameter, had been thrust the corpse of an infant about six months old, and laid over it was a heavy, unworked, limestone slab, nearly square, and about a yard across by four to six inches thick. The bones were badly crushed, and there were no relics.</p> <p>Grave No. 6. This grave contained the flexed skeleton of an adolescent which lay on its back with the head to the north. The feet were near the surface, the head eighteen inches lower, and fitting in a small hole pecked into the friable bed-rock for its reception. Close to the skull, before the face, was a small, well-made, bone fish-hook, without barb.</p> <p>Grave No. 7. This grave contained, at a depth of three and one-half feet, in a hole pecked in the shale, the bones of a very young infant with no accompani-</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

50	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>ments. Adjoining this interment at the south was another disturbed burial, in Grave No. 8. This contained a skeleton in indeterminate posture, probably flexed, minus the skull. Near where the head had been was a flat, notched net-sinker.</p> <p>Later, skeletons 9 and 10, both adults, were found on the bank of the canal, resting on the surface of the shale, in a narrow strip of soil left as a path. Both were flexed, heading west, badly disturbed and broken, and neither had any accompanying relics.</p> <p>Several residents of the locality, who had been present years before at the original finding of the cemetery, kindly gave information and specimens obtained on the spot. The cemetery had formerly covered half an acre, and many skeletons had been found. With them were shell beads, some stone celts, and gouges notched around the long axis.</p> <p>Mr W. W. Adams, now of Union Springs, New York, was interviewed in regard to the curious cache mentioned by</p>
II	INDIAN NOTES



OBJECTS FROM GRAVE 3, MUD LOCK SITE

a, b, e, harpoon points of bone; *c*, bone blank cut by grooving and prepared for making a barb; *d*, bone bodkin; *f*, stone net-sinker

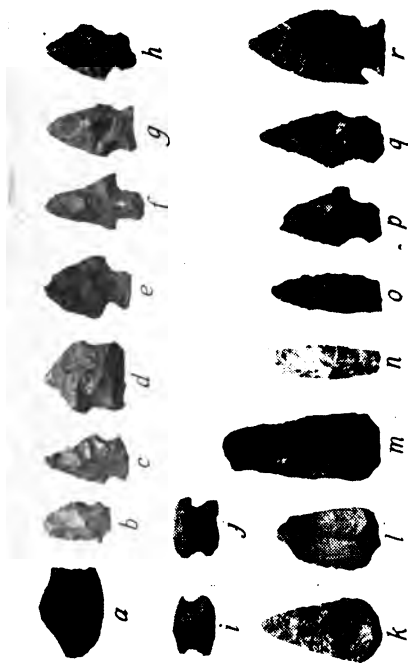
BURIAL OBJECTS	51
<p>Beauchamp. He claimed to have encountered it about a hundred feet south of the cemetery on the canal bank, and added that it contained, besides the plate of mica, several buckhorn knife-handles with the flint blades still attached.</p> <p>Throughout the cemetery, when examined by the writer, were traces of fire-places and general refuse. Directly to the south was found a large and deep kitchen-midden overlying hearths and lodge-sites. Careful excavation disclosed much of interest. Among the stones of the old fires and mixed with charcoal and ashes were bone awls, a harpoon barb of the same type as the barbs found in the graves, pitted hammerstones, notched and grooved net-sinkers (pl. v, c), notched and stemmed arrowpoints and drills of flint and occasionally of jasper (pl. vi), cut antler (pl. vii, a, d), flint knives and scrapers, and sherds of decorated Algonkian pottery of the pointed-base type (pl. viii). Still more interesting were small pieces of steatite vessels, which were by no means uncommon.</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

52	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>Traces of animals used as food were very abundant, and throughout the midden were encountered bones of deer, elk, bear, birds, tortoises, and fish, and mingled with them no small quantity of human bones, split, cracked, and charred in the same way as those of the beasts. A selection of these was saved, and another selection was sent to the New York State Museum at Albany (pl. ix).</p> <p>There can be no doubt of the cannibalistic tendencies of the inhabitants of this site, since human bones were abundant throughout the refuse, and in one fireplace charred fragments of two inferior maxillaries were unearthed, as well as many pieces of human skulls. The long-bones had been cracked for the purpose of extracting the marrow, precisely as were those of the deer and the bear.</p> <p>On the surface of the nearby fields the writer found notched flint arrowpoints and knives (pl. vi, <i>b-h, m, p-r</i>), scrapers and drills (pl. vi, <i>n, o</i>), and a stone gouge (pl. v, <i>a</i>). Gorgets, bannerstones, and platform or monitor pipes have been</p>
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STONE OBJECTS FROM THE MUD LOCK MIDDEN

a, Gouge; *b*, pendant or charm; *c*, grooved sinker; *d*, hammerstone



SCRAPERS, DRILLS, ARROWPOINTS, AND BLADES FROM MUD LOCK

CHARACTER OF SITE	53
<p>found by others. Pitted hammerstones, an odd stone perforated as a charm or pendant, and a grooved sinker were also collected (pl. v, <i>b, c, d</i>).</p> <p>While satisfactory as a camp-site, from its proximity to the great Montezuma swamp, Cayuga lake, and Seneca river, the writer cannot understand why a low spot—a hollow by the shore—and a locality where the soil is of almost flinty consistency, at least during summer, should have been selected as the site of a cemetery, when all about are high and relatively loamy knolls, easy to dig and in every respect more suitable. It would seem to have been impossible for these primitive people, with their crude tools, to dig graves in any other than a damp season. With modern picks and shovels it was difficult for us to open the old graves without first carrying water from the canal to soak the ground. The soil is, however, very soluble.</p> <p>About a mile north of this site, on the Blauvelt farm, is a similar but somewhat larger cemetery. Here some burials have</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

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	<p>been found in a gravel-pit on a knoll, one hundred and fifty yards east of Seneca river. On the surrounding lots, gouges, notched points, and other Algonkian objects predominate.</p> <p>On the southeast end of Kipps island in Seneca river, near Montezuma, is a well-known Indian burial-ground which has been cut to pieces by collectors. We were unable to find anything of interest here, save disturbed graves and fragments of human bones. Near the north-west end of the island are two small, well-formed mounds, but a cross-section of one proved it to be of natural formation. Local collectors have notched arrow-points, gouges, celts, broken two-holed gorgets, and banner-stones from this island. The writer obtained by purchase a native copper knife or spear-point (pl. x, b), a notched stone blade (pl. x, c), and three-quarters of a typical, pointed-base, Algonkian pottery vessel, as restored, part of one side and the rim being missing, but the pointed bottom is entire (fig. 1). This earthen kettle was</p>
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ANTLER AND BONE OBJECTS FROM MUD LOCK

SKINNER — SITE AT CAYUGA

PL. VIII



ALGONKIAN POTSDHERDS FROM MIDDEN AND FIRE-PITS AT MUD LOCK

ALGONKIAN POTTERY	55
<p data-bbox="153 289 731 358">seined by fishermen from the bottom of Seneca river near Prices island.</p>  <p data-bbox="184 1036 677 1090">FIG. 1.—Algonkian jar from Seneca river, near Princes island, Cayuga county, N. Y.</p> <p data-bbox="153 1121 731 1228">On Howlands island further Algonkian artifacts are found; and at Yaugers point, on Lake Cayuga, we also located a camp</p>	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

56	SITE AT CAYUGA
	<p>and burial site of the same people which has yielded a copper celt and the usual relics.</p> <p>The cemetery at Cayuga has, however, several points of unusual interest. First, the graves pecked into the shale; second, the occurrence of net-sinkers, fish-hooks, harpoons, and fish-bones in the tombs, most of which objects are unique or unusual as grave finds, and which, taken together, seem to point to the great importance of fishing in the lives of the inhabitants.</p> <p>The finding of Algonkian pottery, together with the notched points, drills, grooved net-sinkers, and gouges, identifies the natives positively as Algonkian, and not Iroquoian, and the absence of all trade articles, coupled with the crudity of the remains, ascribes them to the indefinite past, certainly long before the coming of the Cayuga.</p> <p>The traces of cannibalism are also unusual and conclusive. There remains only to point out that these people were enjoying a state of culture much less ad-</p>
II	INDIAN NOTES



HUMAN BONES AND TOOTH FOUND AMONG FOOD
REFUSE IN THE MUD LOCK KITCHEN-MIDDEN

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